ROSE™

MEREDITH FINCH • IG GUARA

image

17

Dear Reader,

It hardly seems possible that this is the final issue of Rose, but here we are, so I thought we should end as we began, with a letter of appreciation.

Thanks, first and foremost, to all of you, our loyal readers who have been buying this book since the very first issue. We simply could not have done this without all of your love and support and encouragement and cosplays (you know who you are)!

A huge thank you to my incredibly talented creative team, Ig and Triona. You guys never let me down with a deadline and you always gave one hundred and ten percent to this project. The beauty and emotional beats of this story would not be possible without the synergy between the art and the colors. You elevated each other and made magic on every single page of this book.

Thank you to my letterer-extraordinaire, Cardinal Rae, who always had my back, even when things were tight.

Thank you to my editors, Andy Schimdt and Jeremy Radick. Throughout this process your feedback and critiques were invaluable, and you have both pushed me, in different ways, to become a better, more thoughtful writer.

Thank you to all the staff at Image Comics who work tirelessly to give creators an opportunity to tell their stories. Much love and appreciation to Carey and Melissa for fixing my mistakes and making sure everything looks perfect!

Thank you to my incredible, loving, supportive husband. What would I do without you?

This book has been as much an exploration of my faith as it has been about discovering myself as a writer. And so, this letter of appreciation wouldn't be complete without giving thanks to God for giving me the gifts and blessings that made ROSE possible.

God Bless You,
Meredith Finch

THE CHAMBER OF THE FALLEN.
IT IS TIME, MY BROTHERS.
COME.

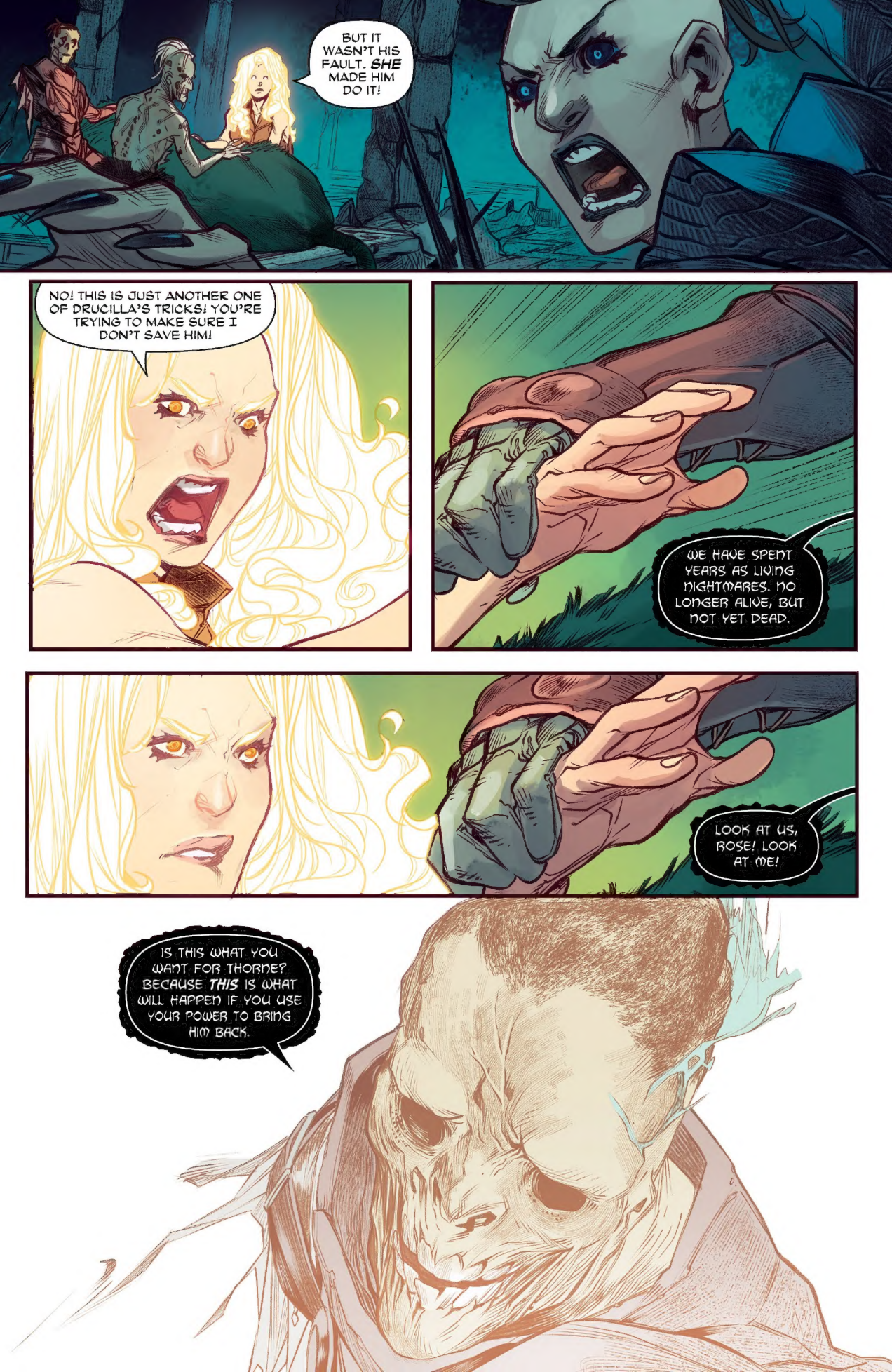
DROP YOUR WEAPON AND SURRENDER TO YOUR FATE, HUMAN. YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY HOPE TO STAND AGAINST THE MIGHT OF A SERVANT OF BALOR.
BALOR?
YOUR SISTER HAS PREPARED THE WAY FOR OUR MASTER TO RISE.
DRUCILLA WILL TAKE HER PLACE AT BALOR'S SIDE. BUT, IT IS NOT TOO LATE FOR YOU TO JOIN HER.
IMAGINE THE POWER. TOGETHER YOU WILL RULE. YOU WILL MAKE TTEREVE GREAT AGAIN.

YOU ALREADY KNOW IN YOUR HEART THAT YOU CANNOT WIN THIS WAR.
THE ONLY QUESTION IS, HOW LONG WILL YOU WATCH YOUR PEOPLE SUFFER, PRINCE FELIX?
LET THE MASTER SAVE YOU FROM YOURSELVES.
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS SURRENDER.

I'VE TOSSED YOU ASIDE ONCE TODAY, SIMON. DO YOU HATE YOURSELF SO MUCH THAT YOU WOULD SEEK TO REPEAT THE EXPERIENCE?
NOT AS MUCH AS I HATE WHAT YOU HAVE BECOME.
BECAUSE YOU ARE WEAK! THE WEAK WILL ALWAYS RESENT THOSE WHO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DO WHAT THEY CANNOT.
YOU WANT STRENGTH?! I'LL GIVE YOU STRENGTH!
DON'T YOU DARE DO IT, THORNE! DON'T YOU EVEN THINK OF LEAVING ME AGAIN!

THORNE?! THORNE!!
DON'T WORRY, THORNE. I'M GOING TO FIX IT. I'LL BRING YOU BACK!
BUT AT WHAT COST, GUARDIAN?
WOULD YOU MAKE HIM ONE OF US?
ALWAYS DYING, NEVER DEAD?

GET AWAY FROM HIM!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SACRIFICE, MY FRIEND.
OUR BROTHER'S DEATH, THORNE'S DEATH, BEGAN THE MOMENT HE TOOK THE LIFE OF AN INNOCENT.
SHE TAUGHT US THAT.
KHATZ ARE TIED MORE CLOSELY TO THE LAND THAN EVEN THEIR GUARDIANS. THEY ARE BORN TO BE ITS PROTECTORS. WHEN THEY BREAK THAT COVENANT...


BUT IT WASN'T HIS FAULT. SHE MADE HIM DO IT!
NO! THIS IS JUST ANOTHER ONE OF DRUCILLA'S TRICKS! YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE SURE I DON'T SAVE HIM!
WE HAVE SPENT YEARS AS LIVING NIGHTMARES. NO LONGER ALIVE, BUT NOT YET DEAD.
LOOK AT US, ROSE! LOOK AT ME!
IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT FOR THORNE? BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU USE YOUR POWER TO BRING HIM BACK.

IN YOUR HEART, YOU KNOW THE TRUTH.
SOB OH, THORNE... SOB I'M SO SORRY...I FAILED.
TO GIVE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE IS NEVER A FAILURE, ROSE.
IT WAS THORNE WHO CALLED US.
IT WAS THORNE WHO USED THE LAST OF HIS LIFE FORCE TO GIVE US THIS MOMENT WITH YOU.
SNIFF WHY? WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?
BECAUSE HE WOULD RATHER DIE THAN HAVE YOU WALK THE SAME TWISTED PATH AS DRUCILLA... AS US.

THE ROLE OF THE GUARDIANS WAS TO EXEMPLIFY VIRTUES, BUT IN OUR PRIDE...

OUR ARROGANCE... WE BECAME CORRUPTIBLE... WEAK. THAT IS HOW OUR CHAINS WERE FORGED.
BUT YOU BROKE YOUR CHAINS; YOU STAYED TRUE TO THE PATH OF THE GUARDIANS. YOU KNEW WHAT WE HAD FORGOTTEN.

PLEASE, ROSE. RELEASE US, JUST AS YOU ONCE RELEASED THE KNIGHT...AND NOW, TODAY...THORNE.

I...

YOUR TRUE POWER COMES FROM WITHIN, LITTLE ONE.

IT IS DONE.

YOU. ARE. FORGIVEN!

WHAT THE...?!
MY FALLEN!
YOU INTERFERING LITTLE WITCH!
YOU WILL PAY FOR THAT.

THE TIME OF KINGS AND GUARDIANS IS OVER.
THE TIME OF BALOR IS--
RUMBLE
NO! IT CAN'T---
THE TIME OF BALOR IS NEVER!

IT IS YOU WHO SHOULD BE AFRAID, DEMON. YOUR MASTER FIGHTS WITH LIES. I FIGHT FOR TRUTH!
YOUR MASTER IS THE LORD OF CHAOS...
...BUT I FIGHT FOR FAITH AND HOPE AND LOVE!
THIS KINGDOM WILL NEVER BELONG TO BALOR!
AWK!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY THAT EASILY, DEMON!

I WILL CARVE YOUR MISERABLE LITTLE HEART INTO PIECES--
GRRRRRRAHHHH!
YES! DO IT, SIMON! FEEL THE RUSH OF POWER, THE TICKLE IN YOUR BELLY TELLING YOU TO SQUEEZE. GIVE IN TO THE DARKNESS.
WE ARE TWO OF A KIND, YOU AND I. TWO TWISTED SOULS... DESTINED FOR ONE ANOTHER.
NO! YOU'RE A MONSTER! YOU HATE EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD, BUT NOTHING MORE THAN YOURSELF!

LIKE I SAID...TWO OF A KIND.
YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF IF YOU THINK THAT MILKSOP COULD EVER HAVE FEELINGS FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU.
AND YOU'RE FIGHTING AGAINST SOMETHING YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, DRUCILLA, BECAUSE IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE SCRABBLING TO FIND A VICTORY. TOO BLIND TO SEE THAT YOU'VE ALREADY LOST.
SIMON! DON'T. THIS ISN'T THE WAY!
LISTEN TO HER! EVEN NOW, AFTER ALL YOU HAVE DONE, STILL SHE BEGS FOR YOUR LIFE. BECAUSE THERE IS NO DARKNESS IN HER.

THAT'S WHY SHE HAS ME.
CORRECTION. THAT'S WHY SHE HAD YOU.
ARRGGGGHHH!
I WILL CRUSH EVERY SINGLE DROP OF LIFE FROM YOUR DISOBEDIENT SOUL...
...UNTIL ONLY THE FEAR REMAINS.
BOOM
LEAVE SIMON OUT OF THIS.
I THINK WE BOTH KNOW...THIS BATTLE WAS ALWAYS MINE TO FIGHT.

NO. ROSE. GET BEHIND--
YOU KNOW SHE'S RIGHT, SIMON. ONLY ROSE CAN END THIS.

YOU ARE GOING TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING YOU HAVE TAKEN FROM ME TODAY, GIRL.
THE FALLEN... THORNE, THEY WERE NEVER YOURS TO BEGIN WITH, DRUCILLA.
I MERELY SET THEM FREE.
I CAN DO THE SAME FOR YOU, DRUCILLA. IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR THAT LITTLE GIRL WHO CRAVED HER MOTHER'S LOVE.
THERE'S STILL TIME FOR HER TO TURN AWAY FROM THE DARKNESS, TO FREE HER HEART FROM ITS PRISON.

HAHA FREEDOM!
TRUE FREEDOM ONLY COMES WHEN YOU HAVE THE POWER TO TAKE WHAT YOU WANT!
WHAT YOU DESERVE!
THEN I WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU DESERVE.
YOU HAVE NURTURED A DARKNESS IN YOUR SOUL THAT YOU HAVE SPREAD FAR BEYOND THESE CASTLE WALLS.

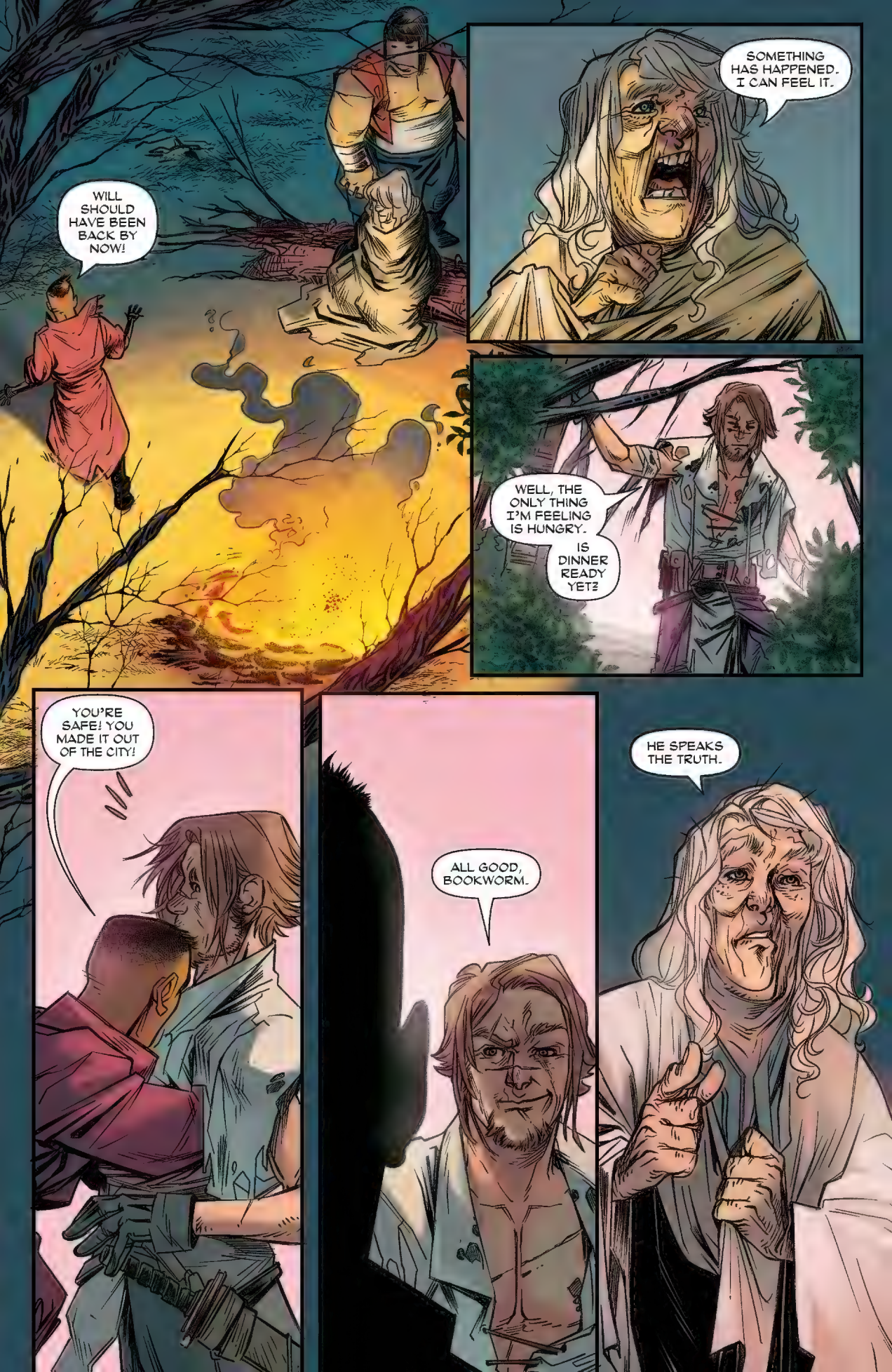
THE MORE CRUEL YOU HAVE BECOME... THE MORE YOU HAVE HATED...
...THE MORE YOU HAVE TRANSFORMED YOURSELF.
YOU HAVE BECOME A CREATURE OF MADNESS... HORROR...
ETERNALLY INSATIABLE AND UTTERLY ALONE.
YOU ARE A HELLISH CREATURE NOW, DRUCILLA. IT'S TIME YOU WENT HOME.*
*C.S. LEWIS

STUPID GIRL! YOU THINK YOU ARE THE FIRST PERSON TO TRY TO FORCE ME FROM MY HOME?!
MY FATHER DIED TRYING... AND SO WILL YOU!
YOU ARE NOT ALONE, ROSE.
TAKE STRENGTH FROM ME.
THROUGH ME...IN ME...YOU ARE CAPABLE OF INFINITELY MORE THAN YOU COULD ASK OR IMAGINE.

STOP! I'M THE QUEEN! THIS IS MY LAND!
TTEREVE IS MINE!!!
NO, DRUCILLA. TTEREVE BELONGS TO ITS PEOPLE.
YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS! I'LL MAKE YOU ALL PAY!!!
BOOM

BÁN? YOU WERE BÁN...OR WAS BÁN YOU?
I AM WHAT YOU NEED ME TO BE.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, MY CHILD.
NOT WELL ENOUGH TO SAVE THORNE.
SOMETIMES THE TRUE DEPTH OF LOVE CAN ONLY BE REVEALED THROUGH A SACRIFICE.
AND A SACRIFICE MADE FROM LOVE IS NOT ALWAYS THE END.
HELLO, LITTLE ONE.

GOOD-BYE, SISTER. I'M SORRY IT HAD TO END THIS WAY.
PRINCE FELIX, I...
DON'T SAY ANYTHING, ROSE.
YOU DID WHAT YOU NEEDED TO DO TO SAVE OUR LAND FROM THE PLAGUE THAT MY SISTER HAD BECOME UPON IT.
BUT I WILL MISS THE GIRL SHE WAS ONCE, BEFORE HER DARKNESS CONSUMED HER.
THANK YOU. FOR HAVING THE COURAGE... THE STRENGTH TO SAVE TTEREVE.


WILL SHOULD HAVE BEEN BACK BY NOW!
SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED. I CAN FEEL IT.
WELL, THE ONLY THING I'M FEELING IS HUNGRY.
IS DINNER READY YET?
YOU'RE SAFE! YOU MADE IT OUT OF THE CITY!
ALL GOOD, BOOKWORM.
HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH.

LOOK! ROSE HAS DONE IT.
WE'RE FREE!

WHAT'S WRONG?
I KNOW THIS IS JUST FELIX'S WAY OF THANKING ME...BUT...
IT'S STARTING TO FEEL LIKE I'M DOING MORE OF WHAT OTHER PEOPLE WANT AND LESS OF WHAT I WANT.
SO... WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
HELP PEOPLE.
AND WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?
I LOVE YOU, SIMON!
END OF CHAPTER.

VOLUME 3, COMING SOON

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THE DESCENDER STORY
ISN'T OVER YET.

THE MAGIC IS
JUST BEGINNING.

JEFF LEMIRE DUSTIN NGUYEN

ASCENDER™

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